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Abstract

Motivation and leadership are two important factors influencing achievement in today's classrooms. Whereas some students are naturally self-motivated, other students struggle to find the basic motivation to reach their full potentials. Goal theory states that people naturally select goals based on mastery learning achievements or performance learning achievements. Based on research literature, this article will provide suggestions on how high school music teachers can encourage students to become more motivated through mastery learning goals as well as exploring how student leadership opportunities can promote mastery learning and increase motivation in the music classroom.

Keywords

mastery learning, goal attributions, student motivation, student leadership, learning goals, goal orientation, goal theory, motivation, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation

There is perhaps no larger influence on student achievement today than motivation. Whether students are influenced through personal or situational interests, most of their daily decisions can be explained in terms of motivational factors. Problems in education might also be traced to a lack of inspired learners. Covington (1998) writes, "The present educational crisis is not merely a matter of poor performance . . . rather, schools face a crisis in motivation" (p. 17). Problems experienced by school music programs, including declining enrollment and higher drop-out rates, may also be viewed as evidence of motivational problems existing in education (Sandene, 1997). A deeper understanding of specific influences on learning is crucial for teachers who wish to provide students with the chance to achieve their full potentials. One of the best ways to understand motivation is to study how goal orientations influence learning choices. The purpose of this article is to define, based on research literature, specific ways in which high school music teachers can encourage students to become more motivated through the use of mastery learning goals. I will address the stated purpose of this article by (a) discussing a shift from a behavioral focus in motivational theory to that of cognition and social context, (b) reviewing issues related to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as they pertain to aspects of goal theory, (c) defining and discussing the implications of research related to mastery learning goals compared with performance learning goals, (d) providing examples of mastery learning goals and how they can enhance student motivation.

Review of Literature

Early research studies in motivation focused primarily on behavioral influences. It was thought that both biological needs and psychological drives impelled people to respond in specific ways (Logan, 1970). In 1943, psychologist Clark Hull proposed that humans are motivated by four drives: hunger, thirst, sex, and avoidance of pain (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In the 1950s, John Atkinson's need achievement theory stated that people are driven to constantly strive for success and avoid failure (Covington, 1998). Other motivational drives during this time were also explained in terms of behavioral responses based on physical needs or emotions. Since the 1970s, emphasis in motivational research has shifted from theories of physiology and behavior to those concerning cognition and social contexts (McPherson, Austin, & Renwick, 2007). Ormrod (2008) believes that contemporary theorists think of human motivation as a function of the cognitive process, stating, "Not only does motivation affect cognition, but in many respects, motivation is cognition" (p. 491). Wiseman and Hunt (2008) suggest motivation

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helps develop metacognitive skills, which in turn help develop skills students use to think and learn.

Theorists who study motivation in educational contexts attempt to understand why some students become successful learners whereas others do not (McPherson et al., 2007; Pintrich, 2003). One important factor they often consider is whether the motivational source can be designated as intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsically motivated students view the process of learning as enjoyable and consider the activities they are involved in to be rewarding (Wiseman & Hunt, 2008). This type of internal motivation makes learning its own reward because it satisfies personal interests (Covington, 1992). Fostering intrinsic motivation is an important goal for educators because it encourages students to be true to themselves (Mudrick, 1997) and to seek out and master new learning challenges (Maehr, Pintrich, & Linnenbrink, 2002). Extrinsically motivated students understand they will be rewarded with something they desire if they do what is asked of them (Wiseman & Hunt, 2008). Unfortunately, these rewards often condition students to expect consistent, tangible reinforcements (Lehmann, Sloboda, & Woody, 2007). A letter grade is one extrinsic motivator that students often tend to focus on during the course of the learning process. Students may also draw on both intrinsic and extrinsic factors at the same time, making it difficult to pinpoint their precise motivations (Lehmann et al., 2007). In the classroom, these motivators are often influenced by specific types of learning goals communicated to students by teachers.

Goals are related to motivation because they are cognitive representations of the approaches and intentions people have in different achievement situations (McPherson et al., 2007; Sandene, 1997). Research studies in psychology have suggested that humans are naturally driven to achieve goals to validate or demonstrate abilities they are attempting to develop or acquire (Molden & Dweck, 2000). From an educational standpoint, the types of goals that teachers set and students adopt guide academic behavior by influencing the amount of motivation students have to reach learning goals (McPherson et al., 2007; Wiseman & Hunt, 2008). Teachers communicate what they value through their selection of learning goals for instruction. Effective teachers set high but realistic goals and successfully communicate these goals to their students (Wiseman & Hunt, 2008). Schmoker (2003) states, "Abundant research and school evidence suggest that setting goals may be the most significant act in the school improvement process, greatly increasing the odds of success" (p. 31). Perhaps just as important for teachers as setting goals, is if the types of goals selected are mastery learning goals or performance learning goals.

In recent decades, goal theory has dominated motivational research studies (McPherson et al., 2007). The

theory, first developed by motivational theorist Dr. Edwin Locke in 1968, proposed that all individuals have patterns of beliefs, called goal orientations, leading to different approaches and responses to various learning activities (Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988). These beliefs include reasons for choosing to pursue certain goals while avoiding others, as well as how progress is evaluated toward reaching these goals (McPherson et al., 2002; Wiseman & Hunt, 2008). Goal orientations are important for educators because they predict certain educational outcomes (Anderman, Austin, & Johnson, 2002) and explain some beliefs, values, and goals students have about learning (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002a). These goal orientations often change based on different learning contexts (Anderman et al., 2002).

The most common differentiation of goal orientations in research is between mastery learning goals, also called task goals, and performance learning goals, also called ability or ego goals (Midgley, 2002; Molden & Dweck, 2000; Ormrod, 2008; Wiseman & Hunt, 2008). Students who favor mastery goals are motivated by the process of learning and achieving challenges presented to them. These students are more likely to engage in more effective learning strategies and higher level thinking skills when learning new material (Sandene, 1997). Mastery learning goals emphasize the challenge of learning and understanding with a goal of continuous improvement despite how many mistakes might be made (Wiseman & Hunt, 2008). These task goals are also associated with the intrinsic motivation to approach success and a positive attitude toward learning (Maehr et al., 2002; Molden & Dweck, 2000).

A study by Kulik, Kulik, and Bangert-Drowns (1990) found that students who were involved in classrooms emphasizing mastery learning goals received higher scores on aptitude tests and generally had more positive attitudes toward the subjects they were learning compared with students in classrooms that did not emphasize mastery learning goals. Also revealed in the study were differences between achievement and aptitude, suggesting teachers who used mastery learning approaches in the classroom helped reduce the differences between high- and low-aptitude learners. This study, along with other similar studies, points to positive effects that mastery learning goals can offer to students, including helping them increase learning efforts, persist through difficulties, and ultimately perform better on academic tasks (Maehr et al., 2002). Teachers wishing to promote mastery learning goals may want to explore the use of different evaluations such as portfolio assessments, which assess student learning by demonstrating a range of improvement over time instead of with an exam score (Blumenfeld, 1992).

In contrast to mastery learning goals are performance or ego goals. Students who prefer this goal orientation are motivated to demonstrate superior abilities and skills by

outperforming others or by trying to avoid the negative judgments of others (Sandene, 1997). Performance goals emphasize the display of high ability and accomplishment without failure (Wiseman & Hunt, 2008). This sense of accomplishment is usually rewarded through external reinforcements rather than intrinsic rewards (Sandene, 1997; Wiseman & Hunt, 2008). In the classroom, performance-oriented learning environments place a large emphasis on grades and competitive situations. Students in these atmospheres are likely to use more basic study strategies such as memorization and rehearsal (Sandene, 1997) because they are more focused on the final product rather than the task of learning (Ames, 1992).

Some researchers have chosen to further classify performance goals as performance approach or performance avoidance, subcategories based on the specific motivations of the individual (Maehr et al., 2002). Performance approach goals motivate competitive individuals to outperform others and feed the need to demonstrate competence to others. An example of a performance approach goal would be a student who enters a debate competition to impress his peers or parents. In this instance, competition has a positive effect on self-image (McPherson et al., 2007). In contrast, performance avoidance goals motivate more noncompetitive individuals to avoid failing and the perceived judgment of incompetence from others, thus having a negative effect on self-image (McPherson et al., 2007; Wigfield & Eccles, 2002b). One example would be a student who practices his or her instrument for hours to avoid ridicule from a demanding private music teacher. Perhaps the most important implication for education and the biggest difference between different goal orientations is their approach to mistakes and failure. From this standpoint, it is important to examine the concepts of self-efficacy, self-determination, and self-attributes.

In 1959, Robert White proposed that all humans have a fundamental biological need to feel competent (Mudrick, 1997; Ormrod, 2008). Covington (1998) proposed a self-worth theory, which states that protecting our sense of ability is one of our highest priorities and, at times, we create strategies to avoid failure in order to prevent a sense of low ability. The perceptions each of us has about ourselves and our circumstances are important factors in motivation and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the beliefs people have about their abilities to be successful at certain tasks (Ormrod, 2008). Self-efficacy is linked to motivation, because beliefs affect future learning choices as well as the effort put forth to reach learning goals (Lehmann et al., 2007; Wiseman & Hunt, 2008). Those with a low sense of self-efficacy may be easily discouraged by failure, whereas those with high self-efficacy will usually increase their efforts and stay persistent when running into challenges (Bandura & Cervone, 2000).

Similar to self-efficacy, self-determination, proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985), is the degree to which individuals determine they have control of their own actions and experiences. Beliefs about the control of one's own destiny are directly linked with intrinsic motivation. When individuals believe they cannot exercise self-determination because their actions are extrinsically decided, intrinsic motivational levels suffer (Maehr et al., 2002; Ormrod, 2008). Self-determined individuals see themselves as in control of their circumstances (Grolnick, Gurland, Jacob, & Decourcey, 2002) and therefore are more likely to be intrinsically motivated (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002b). Students involved in mastery learning situations usually feel in control of their learning potential, whereas those involved in more performance-oriented experiences feel their learning is controlled by outside forces (Maehr et al., 2002).

Self-attributes deal with specific causes that people assign to previous successes and failures and how these assignments affect their persistence in future achievements (Covington, 1998; Molden & Dweck, 2000). A study by Asmus (1986) found a strong relationship between self-attributions in music and attributions in other academic subjects. Student beliefs about the causes of their success or failure in musical tasks influenced their approaches to future musical challenges. The study also found that students cited internal reasons, such as ability and effort, for their success or failures in musical goals. Self-attributions are directly related to motivation through these different acknowledgements of effort and ability in response to failure. When students are more motivated to increase their abilities, they see setbacks to be a natural part of learning and a cue to increase their efforts. Those who are more concerned with demonstrating a strong ability level will feel more threatened by setbacks or failure because they believe it is evidence of a lack of personal talent (Molden & Dweck, 2000). Because they believe lack of ability cannot be remedied with additional effort, they feel they need luck or additional assistance from others to succeed (Covington, 1998). Another study by Sandene (1997) found music students who believed effort was important for success had higher levels of motivation than those who believed ability was more important than effort.

Discussion

Future research studies on the effects of student motivation are important because of the possible implications for education. Because student motivation changes and develops over time (Anderman et al., 2002) and students are not typically motivated by coming to school each day (Ormrod, 2008), educators should make working to increase student motivation a priority (Sandene, 1997; Wiseman & Hunt,

2008). The author Bob Sullo (2007) writes, "If we hope to inspire more students to do high-quality work, we need to create learning environments that result in more students putting school, learning, and working hard into their ideal internal world" (p. 10).

In music, motivation is a crucial element for success (Schmidt, 2005) and is important to the primary goals of music educators (Sandene, 2007). Although limited in scope, research on motivation in music has shown that motivation, as measured by the self-efficacy of students, can predict specific performance achievements (Lehmann et al., 2007; Sandene, 2007). Multiple sources of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation exist in the lives of musicians, and the attitude music students have about challenges and the goals set by teachers are important variables in motivation (Lehmann et al., 2007).

Until teachers clearly identify the specific kinds of learning goals they wish students to achieve, it is impossible for students to take the steps necessary to achieve them (Sullo, 2007). Setting goals provides motivation to achieve certain standards against which performance can be assessed (Bandura & Cervone, 2000) and reveals the purposes students have for engaging in different activities (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002b). Because teachers often identify learning goals students might not identify themselves, it is important for educators to articulate goals that clarify expectations for learning and the standards by which they will be evaluated (Wiseman & Hunt, 2008). Each day, at the start of my high school band rehearsal, I write not only the order of music on the board but also the goal for improvement for each piece. This process gives students a clear idea of what needs to be accomplished during the course of rehearsal and why. I have found goals that are perceived as specific and moderately challenging tend to increase student motivation and persistence. Goals that are perceived as too easily reachable or unimportant may be accepted by students but with few motivational effects. Likewise, goals that are too challenging or confusing sometimes have a negative effect on their persistence and motivation. A study by Bandura and Cervone (2000) recommended that teachers who wish to increase the performance efforts of their students articulate clear standards of expectation and provide specific performance feedback. Following the conclusion of our rehearsal, I will often briefly discuss with the students if the rehearsal was productive or not, if we successfully reached our goals for the day, and what to expect for the next class period.

Research has shown that certain classroom environments tend to foster the development of more positive goal orientations than other classrooms (Sandene, 1997). The adoption of mastery learning goals helps students relate new concepts to past knowledge and use deeper cognitive-thinking strategies (Anderman et al., 2002; Sandene, 1997). Students in this type of environment are more intrinsically

motivated to learn and tend to define success in terms of progress and improvement and satisfaction from taking on challenges. When students believe they are in a learning environment where all have the ability to learn and mistakes made are accepted as part of the learning process, they tend to persist in their efforts despite difficulties they might face (Anderman et al., 2002; Lehmann et al., 2007). I have found my elementary band classes to be one of the most logical places to foster mastery learning goals. Students at this level are all facing the challenges that come with first learning to play an instrument. They are often asked to play on their own in front of the group and their successes are celebrated by everyone, whereas struggles are met with positive support from peers, and an opportunity for everyone to learn how to independently correct their own mistakes. The phrases "we are all on the same team" and "we are all here to learn from each other" are heard and reinforced often by me throughout the process. I believe fostering these types of learning environments is critical to the development of future understandings and motivation to seek out personal improvements.

In contrast, performance-centered environments focus more on displays of ability, grades, and achievement comparisons (Anderman et al., 2002; Wiseman & Hunt, 2008). Students in classrooms that use competitive motivators tend to use more surface-level learning skills and recall more basic knowledge than concepts. Success is defined as performing at the highest level or outperforming other students (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Maehr et al., 2002). Failure to perform well often leads to reduced involvement, lowered intrinsic motivation, and negative emotions stemming from a perceived lack of ability (Molden & Dweck, 2000; Wigfield & Eccles, 2002a). Although I do not believe all performance-centered learning situations are negative, we must be careful to craft these experiences so they do not have a damaging impact on student learning. Perhaps one of the more common performance-centered situations in music classes is when students audition for chair placement with other students in the ensemble. Although they are initially motivated to prepare musically for the audition, students may find that their focus shifts to comparisons made with other auditions where students fall as musicians in a specific rank order. This does not tend to foster a "team environment" or team approach to learning. The same can be said of "challenges," where students can reaudition against a student sitting in a higher chair in order to try to move up higher in the section. One alternative to chair seating auditions might be to use rotational seating, where students move to different parts for different musical selections.

In the music classroom, musicians who are part of mastery learning goal environments are motivated by the goals and challenges presented to them. Music educators who wish to develop a lifelong interest and appreciation of

music play an important role in the source of their motivation. A study by Sandene (1997) on the variables related to student motivation in instrumental music suggested that students be allowed to have some choices in music selection and a chance to develop their individual interests. The study found that students were more motivated when expectations for success were reasonable, students received individual attention as needed, and the class atmosphere was noncompetitive in nature (Sandene, 1997). The same study found higher motivation levels in classes where the teacher provided higher rates of positive feedback. Studies by Mudrick (1997) and Lehmann et al. (2007) indicate that music directors can increase student motivation by selecting and performing challenging musical literature and letting students have a chance to genuinely enjoy their musical performance experiences. I have found one of the best ways to increase student motivation is by high-quality music literature that students can personally identify with and use to grow as musicians throughout the learning process. Students are often intrigued by comparing how aspects of a programmatic work compare with situations and experiences in their own lives. When the music teacher can successfully link this to specific, targeted feedback for improvement, the focus can easily shift to “the team,” working toward a meaningful, high-quality performance experience. Teachers should take advantage of the numerous publications, promotional recordings, and online resources to find quality music for students to get excited about experiencing.

One of the most important differences between mastery and performance goal orientations is the difference in attributions for success or failure (Sandene, 1997). Mastery goal-oriented students interpret their efforts as positively related to their ability to solve problems and tend to favor self-instruction. When self-esteem becomes equated with ability rather than effort, students may avoid taking on challenges to prevent failure and a perceived lack of ability (Ormrod, 2008; Sandene, 1997). Teachers should focus more on rewarding effort (Covington, 1998) and on building positive climates of learning in which students feel safe to make mistakes (Sullo, 2007). Students should be taught to analyze the causes of success and failure in constructive ways and in which they can value their hard work and effort as a source of personal worth and the will to learn (Covington, 1998). Teachers can focus on how each student is learning rather than comparing their performance with others, as well as helping students develop their own means of self-regulated learning (Anderman et al., 2002; Wiseman & Hunt, 2008). I enjoy asking both evaluative and conceptual questions during class that catalyze students to be active participants in the learning process. Sometimes this may be as simple as asking, “What didn’t work there, and

how can we make it better?” or as complex as “What is the composer trying to say in this section?”

Music performance ensembles offer a unique opportunity for teachers to emphasize the values of teamwork and cooperative learning supported by mastery learning goals. Bands, choirs, and orchestras by their very nature are task-involved, requiring each member of the ensemble to actively work through musical mistakes and challenges to achieve the final product of a fine performance. Success is realized through the overall effort of the group, with an understanding that increased effort from individuals will raise the overall musical ability and talent of the ensemble. The rewards for students involved in these music ensembles are often intrinsic in nature, stemming from personal connections with others and aesthetic responses to the performance of the music. Well-trained student ensemble leaders have the ability to motivate other students in the group to raise their performance standards, making for an even more enjoyable learning experience.

Student leadership is perhaps the hidden motivational gem in the realm of education that can intrinsically motivate some students to strive for higher levels of personal and academic achievement. Students often connect with their peers in ways teachers cannot. Adolescents spend many hours each day with each other in school and often find understanding, support, and encouragement from those who share similar interests (McPherson et al., 2007). Leaders are perceived by others as individuals who have the desire to lead, are honest and self-confident, and can influence others through their knowledge and integrity (Bryman, 1992). Research has presented evidence for the importance of human motivation in the prediction of leadership (Schneider, 1999), and successful music directors recognize that letting students experience responsibility can be an important motivational factor (Mudrick, 1997). How might teachers motivate students to be more actively involved in the learning process through student leadership opportunities?

Students become more invested and involved in cooperative learning situations through the interpersonal communication of working with others. In cooperative learning, the learning process is shared, and all involved learn from the knowledge and experiences other group members bring to the table with them. Group leaders can facilitate the direction of conversation and guide the group in the decision-making process. In one study, Schmidt (2005) found that students learned at their best when working together with other students in a cooperative learning environment. In music performance ensembles, cooperative learning can be promoted through sectionals being taught or run by groups of students working together. Small student chamber ensembles that rehearse and perform on a regular basis and are run by the students themselves provide another opportunity for teamwork. In these

collaborative learning situations, students are more intrinsically motivated because they are not competing to solve problems but working together to find the best solutions.

Other examples of student leadership promoting motivation through mastery learning goals are situations that give students a chance to build their self-esteem and self-confidence. Leadership positions naturally place students in situations of being responsible for the care and well-being of others. When student leaders are given the chance to set certain goals, achieving them can provide positive feedback and a reassurance that they have the ability to be successful leaders. The pride experienced from the completion of a project or finding a problem's solution raises the self-efficacy and attributes students will have for future learning situations. Music teachers can promote the building of self-esteem and efficacy by putting students in situations where they must be responsible for certain tasks or helping other students. Even smaller tasks such as passing out music or setting up stage equipment can help students take the initiative to be responsible and follow through. Students who are responsible for certain tasks have more opportunity to see the importance of the relationship between ability and effort and to form more positive attributes about learning. They also can begin to draw deeper connections on the critical role they play in the success of the team and find personal pride in their investment of the music program itself. Each year, our high school band elects two "librarians," who are responsible for the preparation, distribution, and collection of all the music we are using in class. These students understand that in this position, other students are counting on them to stay organized and remain proactive about completing the tasks they are given to prepare for each rehearsal. Other class officers have similar responsibilities that can directly contribute to the success or failure of the group.

Student leaders must often persevere through difficulties and be committed to see challenges through to their successful conclusions. Similar to mastery learning goals, perseverance and commitment are two characteristics necessary for effective learning. Leaders must increase their effort and use specific strategies or creativity to find solutions to learning problems. Continuous self-evaluation is important for students to determine where they stand and what actions they may need to take in the future. Forming and sharing specific goals is a crucial step in the learning process and can help leaders persist when they encounter difficulties. Music teachers should stay open to the possibility of putting student leaders in controlled situations that are safe but cause them to be outside of their comfort zones. Giving certain choices or options is one way to encourage independent thinking within certain guidelines. Staying persistent and committed are crucial motivational ingredients for students to increase learning and discover their hidden talents. In my ensembles, I meet frequently

with student leaders to express certain problems or inaccuracies I am seeing or hearing. I use this as a basis to motivate them to actively make positive adjustments within their sections as well as to get their ideas for possible changes.

Conclusion

One of the most important things for teachers to instill in their students is the desire and motivation to learn. Students who are presented with clear learning goals and the support system with which to achieve them have much a greater chance to be academically successful and motivated to maintain high standards. When teachers promote the use of mastery learning goals in their classrooms, students are able to focus on the learning process itself without being afraid of making mistakes or failing. Students are more intrinsically motivated through mastery learning goals because they understand they have the power to improve their abilities by increasing their efforts, and they value challenges as opportunities for personal growth. Student leadership situations provide some of the best ways for students to become more intrinsically motivated through the promotion of cooperation, fulfilling responsibilities, and making decisions and discoveries about personal learning styles. The teacher has the ultimate power to decide what the classroom atmosphere will be for students. As motivational researcher Deborah Stipek (2002) states, "All students can be competent if competence is defined in terms of developing mastery understanding" (p. 313). Educators who understand and actively promote mastery learning goals set students up for academic success and the intrinsic motivation needed to reach higher than they ever thought possible.

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