

101

*Creative Strategies  
for Reaching  
Unmotivated  
Student Learners*

**SAMPLE PAGE**

A practical resource

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of approaches and  
activities for helping

unmotivated, discouraged  
and/or disruptive students  
(grades 2-8)

Susan J. Smith-Rex, Ed.D and James H. Rex, Ph.D.

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# Strategy 10

## Popular Mannerisms

Mannerisms are behaviors people do that can become habits. Those mannerisms that are perceived as positive or popular can become life-long mannerisms with practice and discipline. The mannerisms perceived as negative or bad (listed below) should be eliminated by using self-monitoring tools. (Examples of self-monitoring tools are on pages: 42-49.)

Some children have mannerisms that tell others they are happy, likeable and deserving students. Listed below are some of the positive mannerisms that make these children more accepted, respected, and successful.

Discuss these traits and then have each student rate themselves on the following scale.

### Positive Mannerisms

1. Smile a lot
2. Use positive self-talk and affirmations
3. Do not act jealous of fellow classmates who are doing well. You can do it too!!
4. Say nice things about other people.
5. Use your support team to talk about important issues.
6. Reach out to help other people.
7. Remember that things on your back burners are out of your control. Focus your energy on things listed on your front burners.
8. Do what is expected of you on time and without complaining!

### Types of People with Bad Manners

1. Hogs—People who don't know how to share and take turns.
2. Whiners—People that whine and complain when they don't get their way.
3. Big Mouths—People who can't shut up. They constantly talk, usually about themselves or other people.
4. Gross Outs—People who burp, pass gas around others, talk with a mouth full of food, or sneeze and cough without covering their mouth.

5. All Hands People—People who push, poke, and touch people when they shouldn't be.
6. Butinskys—People who constantly interrupt others and blurt out.
7. The Wrecking Crew—People who wreck other people's property.

### Rate Your Popular Mannerisms

Place an "X" in the box that best describes you.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

	Strong	OK	Poor
I smile a lot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I do a lot of positive self talk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I say nice things about others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I use my support team.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I help other people often.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I focus on things I need to do. (front burners)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I do assignments on time without complaining.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have good manners when I eat.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

# Strategy 26

## Personal Prescription

Self-Monitoring by the student, whether it is academic or behavioral, can often be achieved through the use of a personal prescription. The student and the teacher discuss which behaviors, if changed, could enable the student to better achieve school success. Prescriptions are checklists that the student reviews during the day and mentally asks if effort is being exerted to improve on a behavior.

Use index cards to create your own. Place the cards on a desk, inside a notebook, or possibly at home on a bathroom mirror or on a bedroom wall.

1. Am I in my seat?

2. Do I have my materials out for class?

3. Am I talking or touching anyone?

4. Am I listening to the teacher?

5. Am I taking notes?

1. Am I using good eye contact?

2. Am I smiling enough?

3. Am I speaking up?

4. Am I thinking good thoughts  
about myself and others?

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## Strategy 48

### *The Letterman Top Ten (reasons to go to school)*

Assume the role of comedian David Letterman. His time-honored routine on his late evening show where he reads off the top reasons for something (in this case school) might be familiar to many of your students. Have some fun exploring the humorous possibilities that exist regarding school attendance and adult life.

Begin by creating an overlay that will allow you to display each reason as you work your way from number 10 to number 1 with your students and explore the humor and the truth behind each statement. You may even have some comic genius in the class who may want to add to the list.

Sometimes, we get so serious about school and schooling that children don't believe that humor and laughter can exist as a part of the discussion. Yes, it is serious business, but all of us benefit from laughing on occasion at ourselves, and, yes, even our beliefs.

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### ***Top 10 Reasons to Go to School***

10. If you've never been caught passing notes, there's a job for you at the FBI.
9. If you survive a school sponsored fieldtrip, you should be favored to win on "Survivor."
8. If you can leave the principal's office without crying, you will laugh at Simon when he says you're lousy!
7. By learning to wake up quickly and dress in less than a minute to get to school, you'll be fully qualified as a fire fighter.
6. By learning to ride your school's bus system, you'll be ready for the New York City subway.
5. By carrying heavy backpacks through school hallways, you'll be conditioned to move your own furniture throughout your lifetime.
4. By mastering the art of pretending to be interested, you will be prepared for years of dating conversations.
3. By learning to accept your teacher's criticism, you can laugh when Donald Trump says, "You're Fired."
2. By waiting for bathroom breaks, you will be able to train your bladder to endure long business meetings.
1. By learning to consume cafeteria food, you will be able to win the food competition in "Fear Factor."

# Strategy 66

## *The Music of Learning*



The power of music is undeniable. It not only “soothes the “savage beast” it calms us, excites us, inspires us, disturbs us, and, sometimes, even enables us. We have a friend who always exercises to the music from the movie, “Rocky.” She swears it motivates her even on her worst days to make it through her routine.

Most of our students listen to music. It has important meaning to many of them. Often, that meaning is further enhanced by lyrics. It may or may not be easy for teachers to relate to, or even understand, some of the popular music and lyrics that students enjoy; but (here in) lies a potentially powerful ally in our efforts to motivate students.

For example, some students who will moan and groan about the prospect of reading and explaining written poetry will enthusiastically play, read and explain the meaning of the lyrics in their favorite song. And, believe it or not, some of these are as thought provoking and controversial as anything in a college American Literature course!

Of course, the teacher must use some discretion in the selections allowed, but once the ground rules are set and explained, you will be surprised at the variety and quality of many of the songs nominated by your students. You may want to select some of your favorites for inclusion also.

The options here are many. You may want to simply set aside some time each day or each week for “approved” songs to be played and the lyrics (preferably typed and handed out) discussed by the presenter and the class.

You may want to turn this unit into a “music festival” of sorts where the class votes on which songs were the most thought provoking, humorous, romantic, inspirational, etc.

Finally, for older students, and where resources allow, the music selected can become a multi-media presentation, where the students individually, or in pairs, use slides or video to supplement the lyrics and/or music and ‘produce’ presentations for the class and/or school.

Remember, most of our students are listening to, and thinking about, contemporary music. Whether their tastes are country-western or rap, these are songs to which they and their friends attach meaning. When we find legitimate ways to utilize that meaning within our classrooms as part of our instructional goals, we introduce a powerful medium and a powerful motivational force.

## Strategy 77

### Do Your Students Believe In Themselves?

We get out of life pretty much what we put into life!  
As Dr. Seuss said,

*“You have brains in your head.  
You have feet in your shoes.  
You can steer yourself in any  
direction that you choose.”*

Many students have a hard time believing in themselves and believing that they can make meaningful decisions about their lives. Consider renting and showing a movie once each month that emphasizes personal courage, perseverance and self-determination. Whether it is an animated film like “Finding Nemo” or a serious look at real life obstacles like “Radio,” students will be willing to discuss the film and its implications for themselves and others. Remember, with your assistance, powerful movies can teach life long lessons about personal empowerment.

## Strategy 78

### Remember, We Learn More From A Model Than From A Critic

#### 15 Student Thoughts for Teachers:

1. Don't do things for me that I can do for myself.
2. Don't spoil me. I know quite well that I should not have all I ask for.
3. Don't be afraid to be firm, but fair, with me. It lets me know where I stand.
4. Don't correct me harshly in front of other people. I'll take much more notice if you talk quietly with me in private.
5. Don't demand explanations for my wrong behavior. I really don't know why I did it.

6. Don't nag. If you do, I shall have to protect myself by appearing deaf.
7. Don't try to preach to me. You'd be surprised how well I know right from wrong.
8. Don't use force with me. It teaches me that power is all that counts. I will respond more readily to being led.
9. Don't be inconsistent. That confuses me and makes me try harder to get away with everything that I can.
10. Don't make promises you are not going to keep. That will discourage my trust in you.
11. Don't let my "bad habits" get a lot of your attention. It may encourage me to continue them.
12. Don't try to discuss my behavior when I'm upset. For some reason, my hearing is not very good at that time.
13. Don't protect me from consequences. I need to learn from my own experiences.
14. Don't put me off when I ask questions. If you do, you will find that I stop asking.
15. Don't let my fears arouse your anxiety. Then I will become more afraid of failing.