

# Student Engagement+ Learning Communities = Student Motivation

Presented by Jodie Maddox and Colleen Kolich

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# Introductions: Jodie and Colleen

- Jodie Maddox: Assistant Principal at St. James Academy Curriculum and Instruction
  - BS Central Missouri University in Education with emphasis in Special Education
  - Masters from Benedictine College School Leadership
  - 20 years of teaching experience
  - Two teenage kids lucky to have their mom at their high school daily
- Colleen Kolich
  - English Department Chairperson
  - Instructional Coach
  - BA Benedictine College in English
  - Masters in Education from Baker University
  - Brain-based instruction
  - 23 years of teaching Junior and Senior High
  - Four daughters: All Different/ Nervous about paying for weddings, but I have to.
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# Presentation Description

- This interactive session will highlight strategies useful in any classroom to increase student motivation. By creating learning communities, students learn from each other as well as the instructor. This system incorporates brain-based learning, cooperative learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching techniques to elevate classroom dynamics. With this instructional strategy, participants will learn how to put students in high-pressure, high-expectant situations resulting in positive learning experiences. Participants will find this is a great way to add variety and novelty to the classroom that will impact student learning. Students learn how their peers think and approach a variety of discipline challenges while assuming a low-risk to grades. Students in regular classrooms can be challenged by higher-level thinking activities knowing that the activity results can only have a positive impact on their grades and learning. The participants will learn new techniques to incorporate into their classroom instruction to directly impact student learning.
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# Why I created this communities

- AP Literature and Composition Class
  - Stress over taking practice exams
  - Put time element to the activity
  - Added thesis statement writing
  
- Applied to English IV class
- Slowly implementing with English I

# Learning Community System

- Benefits:
  - Puts students in high-pressure (sometimes), high-expectant situations resulting in only a positive impact on grade.
  - Allows students to take risks without a grade consequence
  - Provides novelty to learning, ( brain-based)
  - Establishes Competition (Student- centered)
  - Appeals to the way the brain processes information: Auditory, Visual, Kinesthetic
- Language:
  - Students learn to defend their choice
  - Interpersonal skills are strengthened
  - Tolerance for other students' opinion
  - Learn to negotiate for a consensus
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# Benefits continued

- Positive impact on grades (Gets students to have a positive acceptance of the system)
- High-expectant activities: Be sure that you are realistic about the class dynamics so as not to discourage.
- Since they have extra-credit points, I can be more demanding on content assignments because the grade is protected.
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# Benefits Continued

- An alternative to “drop low grade” or “free homework pass” / makes effort and class content connected to these “grade graces.”
- Students, who may not be heard and are correct in their thinking, gain some confidence and peer recognition.
- Reality: The most a student has earned in a semester is 20 points in the formative assessment category of his or her grade.
- Classroom dynamics and student engagement change dramatically
- Builds a positive student/teacher relationship(“None of my other teachers do this...”)
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# Application

- Start Simple: 1<sup>st</sup> Exposure: Riddle challenge to get across the idea
- Brain-based puzzle- gets the mind primed for your content( There are a lot of resources for math)
- Can replace a brain break but still maintains content focus
- White board activity: Brain-based: 10:24: 7( I use this to expose to test questions. They are exposed several times to the test questions that they have confidence when taking the exam. Teaching essential vocabulary)
- AP Mc questions
- Thesis statement writing (Should be writing in all curriculum areas)
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# Any subject and any assignment

- Study Guide Matching
- Football math problems
- Whiteboard Social Studies content
- Wager Literary terms
- Rhetorical Situations for Speeches, Letters, and Essays
- Thesis statements
- Essential vocabulary study
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# Trouble-shooting

- Group dynamics: One person dominates: make a new person in the group responsible for the writing or content. Remember that you want the information exposure on some of the content.
- Group incompatibility: Change groups often/ I change with each unit taught
- Establish a “Speak with good purpose” for negative comments/ Since this only benefits the students’ grades, they will usually comply
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# Culmination

- Students will intrinsically help others without the extrinsic motivation
- 1984
- LBD
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# What students have to say

- “Learning Communities are an effective way to learn challenging material. It is helpful to be able to discuss possible answers to a question when new material is presented. Having to explain and defend your answer is a valuable part of the learning communities.” Carter
- “Learning Communities allow for friendly competition while cultivating a healthy learning environment. When the competitive spirit is added to learning, acquiring knowledge becomes more natural.” Arth
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# More Student Input

- “Learning Communities are a great way to have fun and stay focused while learning. Every class holds an exciting new challenge, and I’m never bored. 10/10 would recommend.”  
Colanero
- “I like that I can practice the AP style work without having it negatively affect my grade every time I take a practice quiz.”  
Martinez
- “I like Learning Communities because my classmates often think about things differently than I do. By hearing how they analyze, my skills have been strengthened.” Schneider
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