

Since the summer of 2019, VEJ authors have shared motivational strategies derived from the MUSIC Model of Motivation (Jones, 2009, 2018). Strategies shared have encompassed eMpowerment, Usefulness, Success, and Interest. In our Summer 2021 issue, we turn our attention to the final research-based principle in this model; I invite you to consider “Caring.” Share how you design curriculum so that students understand that others in educational settings care about their learning as well as about who students are as people.

Motivation matters in the English Language Arts classroom. In fact, it is possible that motivation has never been so urgent an issue in education as it is right now. As I write this, the USA is nearly a year into grappling with a global pandemic that has complicated and troubled every aspect of our lives in ways large and small. Teachers, parents, administrators, and students have overcome obstacles, adapted to rapid changes to instructional delivery methods, reworked assignments and curriculum and learned a dizzying array of new technology tools. School buildings closed for a time, but learning never stopped, even as communities struggled to balance the risks against rewards in a landscape that seemed to change minute by minute.

In a time of blended models of instruction, when teachers may be preparing instruction for classes in which their students are in person, or online, or a combination, how do teachers demonstrate care for their students, for their colleagues, or for themselves? As a teacher educator, I often say to my students that “teaching is all about the relationship.” This phrase is the foundation of my teaching philosophy. Embedded in this phrase is an implicit message of caring; for our students, for parents, for each other, and for ourselves. This message, these relationships, is more urgent now than ever before in our lifetimes, as we stumble together through the maze of teaching and learning in a pandemic.

- Our tried-and-true strategies and trusted resources may or may not work in a blended classroom. Blended learning and distance learning environments can be perceived as fragmented or disconnected by both teachers and students. Demonstrating caring in these circumstances is difficult and also utterly essential for student (and teacher) motivation and engagement.
- Educational equity issues have been spotlighted by necessary shifts in our approaches to teaching. Issues of access were brought suddenly into the forefront of our national conversation in new, more urgent ways. In this time of upheaval and uncertainty teachers, students, and parents require more understanding, care, and compassion in order to ensure their needs, both academic and personal, are met so that continuous learning is possible whether at a distance, in person, or in a hybrid circumstance.
- When students know that adults around them care about their academic success as well as who they are as people, students are more motivated to engage with instruction, even (or perhaps especially) when instructional formats change and students must adapt to new delivery systems.
- What are some ways you have structured your curriculum (in classrooms or virtual spaces) to demonstrate care for students?
- How do you demonstrate that you are approachable and relatable to students?
- In what ways do you communicate that you respond promptly? What strategies work well for you in striving to give timely feedback?
- What moves do you make to ensure that students feel respected by other students and by you, both face-to-face and online?
- In what ways do you communicate that you genuinely care about how they achieve the learning outcomes for your class?

- When have you seen your students genuinely motivated to participate in your classroom community?
- What specific topics for applying the 5 C's of creative thinking, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship resulted in relating the content to students' individual care and empathy?
- In what ways have you changed your students' perceptions of being cared for by using learning activities?

This issue of the *Virginia English Journal* will contain three types of articles, described below:

**Feature articles:** These are longer articles of 3,000 to 5,000 words (including references, tables, and figures) that blend research and practice, providing educators with theoretical understandings as well as practitioner-friendly ideas.

**Great teaching ideas:** Shorter articles of 1,000 to 2,000 words (including references, tables, and figures) that focus on effective and innovative teaching practices that other educators can quickly put into action in their classes.

**Budding scholars:** English and English education majors interested in sharing their ideas with an audience of fellow educators are encouraged to submit. Articles of 2,000 to 4,000 words (including references, tables, and figures) should blend research-based insights with practical suggestions for application and share unique perspectives on English instruction.

We also invite writers to bring variety to our journal by contributing book reviews and poetry that will appeal to our readership.

**Book Reviews:** We invite you to submit a book review 1,200 to 1,400 words, showcasing how it impacted you as an educator.

**Poetry:** The *VEJ* wants to celebrate our poets. If you use poetry in your classroom, then please include what has worked for you along with your poems.

**Submission deadline: May 1, 2021**

#### References

Jones, B. D. (2017, December). *User guide for assessing the components of the MUSIC®*

*Model of Motivation*. Retrieved from <http://www.theMUSICmodel.com>

